

**Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8043****2. Project contact details****2.1 Lead authority name**

Kent County Council

**2.2 Details of the person leading this application**

Tom Marchant

**Role**

Head of Strategic Planning and Policy and Interim Head of Countryside and Community Development

**Email address**[tom.marchant@kent.gov.uk](mailto:tom.marchant@kent.gov.uk)**Phone number****2.3 Details of a senior stakeholder from lead authority****Role****Email address****2.4 Details of a Section 151 Officer from lead authority****Role****Email address****2.5 List your project partners and provide a single point of contact for each organisation.**

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Project partner organisation	Name of single point of contact	Role of single point of contact	Email address of single point of contact	Phone number of single point of contact
Ashford Borough Council				
Dover District Council				
Folkestone and Hythe District Council				
Thanet District Council				

### 3. Your project proposal

#### 3.1 Project title

Infrastructure Mapping Platform: "Exploring the use of data to improve our understanding of strategic planning and better co-ordinate the provision of infrastructure across Kent."

#### 3.2 Project description

The Kent and Medway Infrastructure Mapping Platform (IMP) will be a digital tool consolidating and publishing key local infrastructure data. It will be used to coordinate the planning and delivery of 'good' growth – growth that is well designed, sustainable, well connected, future proofed and resilient.

This project will focus on East Kent (Phase 1) and provide an exemplar for the use of data as a tool for change. East Kent is defined as the districts of Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe and Thanet. Future phases will expand the platform across the remaining areas of Kent.

#### 3.3. How much funding are you applying for?

218200.00

### 4. Project assessment

#### 4.1 Describe the problem that your beta project seeks to provide a solution to.

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This project will be the first stage in transforming the current Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (GIF) document, and its underlying data, into a dynamic, online digital platform. This will enable users to publish, discuss and interact with up-to-date infrastructure data and extract or download areas of interest in a range of formats such as csv, xlsx, png or geojson. The GIF was a pioneering PDF document providing a strategic picture of planned development and infrastructure requirements, to support growth across Kent and Medway to 2031. Because the GIF was a static document, it only provided a snapshot of information at a single point in time. Hence, its usefulness was quickly diminished for the purposes of robust, evidence based strategic planning for all planning authorities in Kent who referred to the evidence within the document.

Most local planning is conducted within individual districts, in isolation from their neighbours. The Infrastructure Mapping Platform (IMP) will provide a vital visual and analytical tool to users (planning officers) for highlighting cross boundary matters; data to understand growth and the provision of infrastructure; and an improved suite of land designation datasets which may affect development; all at a wider geography.

In line with GDS principle 5, "Iterate. Then iterate again", Phase 1 of the IMP will focus on East Kent districts to fully explore the principles of the platform. We will be collecting user feedback on its interactivity, outputs and testing key functionality. This feedback will be used to inform further phases, expanding the scope, data and potential of the platform at each stage. Funding will be used to accelerate delivery of Phase 1 and provide a robust but flexible foundation for the development for further phases.

Once all phases are complete, users will benefit from having access to current, accurate planning-related data from a single site. The IMP will give a spatial picture of the County - providing evidence to inform growth and infrastructure strategies and allow early conversations between planning authorities, as well as other infrastructure and utility providers. This improved coordination will lead to better growth and infrastructure outcomes and the development of resilient and sustainable communities across Kent.

### 4.2 Describe the outcomes and outputs you aim to achieve by the end of the project.

The main output of the project will be the delivery of a dynamic, online strategic planning platform, accessible to users via a secure web portal. Phase 1 will test functionality, explore user requirements and develop design, data and maintenance strategies which can eventually be scaled up to enable a Kent-wide platform.

Once complete, the IMP will be a comprehensive, single source, live-data platform enabling coordinated responses to strategic planning with a robust and up to date evidence base.

District Councils are considered key organisations who will be able to contribute local data into the platform. This includes data relating to local plan evidence bases, as well as infrastructure which is led by and managed by district authorities. Furthermore, through engagement with districts at this early stage, they will be able to provide feedback on the platform, and its functionality – ensuring that the platform benefits County and District objectives alike around sustainable growth.

The platform will be developed in such a way that makes it easy to replicate at other local authorities both in terms of its technology and user experience. Most of the software is widely available and capable of acquiring data from multiple sources in a secure and intuitive way. The front face will be a user-friendly web portal with opportunities to share knowledge and provide wiki-style tutorials.

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### 4.3 Tell us how your project will make local government services safer, more resilient and/or cheaper to run in the context of the problem area.

Planning reform is currently a 'fluid' topic, but this platform will provide a stable foundation to enable the strategic planning function in Kent to perform consistently and efficiently. By making all strategic planning data available from a single location, we anticipate far greater coordination between infrastructure delivery partners and reduced costs by having the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time.

This project has also taken into consideration several national policies and strategies relating to the digitalisation of [strategic] planning. These include the Planning White Paper, Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the rapid growth of PlanTech. Our project fits well with the timely creation of DLUHC Digital.

Data sharing and access will be via a secure portal requiring user registration and approval with bulk sharing of datasets managed via Azure Data Share or industry recognised secure file transfers (SFTP). Access will be controlled through Microsoft Azure Active Directory authentication.

### 4.4 Tell us about who your project stakeholders are and how you plan to engage them.

For Phase 1:

KCC Officers- Will provide steer and feedback as end users to develop Phase 1 and enhance usability based on the scope.

East Kent District Planning Officers- As above accounting for the differing planning needs District Councils compared with the County Council. Officers can also provide further datasets focused on district-led infrastructure.

KCC Members, East Kent Members- to secure and build support for the platform and promote it to a wider audience (as appropriate).

We have an internal MS Teams site (KCC officers) for collaboration, exploring functionality and product testing. We have also created an Engagement Tracker that logs and records actions from all meetings, both internal and external. We are exploring options for enabling secure access to these for our district partners, before Phase 1 is deployed.

We intend to expand collaboration and outcomes to national planning networks following successful delivery of all phases of the platform.

### 4.5 Tell us about any local government sector engagement you've carried out or intend to carry out.

Phase 1 has identified a range of organisations that we will engage with as part of a successful deployment. These include the LAs of Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe; but also internal KCC service areas and Public Health. We have a comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Strategy in place along with the Engagement Tracker.

We have engaged, at a high level, with the LAs who are widely supportive of us leading the development of the platform and we have a strong officer-level working relationship with them all. We also have regular engagement with Public Health as part of KCC's statutory duties and relevant data is available via our Public Health Observatory.

The IMP will collect data from a range of sources including nationally available datasets such as those maintained by Defra or Ordnance Survey. These are primarily geospatial datasets and we will install direct links to them.

We are involved in several local planning and technical networks at all levels of our organisations and the IMP aligns with the Government Design Principles, all of which will support its development as a live service.

### 4.6 How will the project budget be used?

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Item (e.g. backfill staff time, buy in user researcher, software, hardware and others)	Time/quantity	Total cost/value £	Where will the funding come from? (e.g. Local Digital funding or a particular project partner)
Project Manager (Backfill)	12 months (0.6 FTE)	38700	Local Digital funding
Lead Analyst (Backfill)	12 months (0.6 FTE)	33000	Local Digital funding
Web developer to build web portal and connectors	One off expense	20000	Local Digital funding
KCC ICT data platform configuration (hosting database)	Depends on support/maintenance package	10000	Local Digital funding
IMP Phase 1 Data Engineering	10 days @ £750 per day	7500	Local Digital funding
Data Solutions Architect	12 months (0.2 FTE)	0	KCC Technology (at nil cost)
GIS Specialist	12 months (0.2 FTE)	0	KCC Technology (at nil cost)
Full-time Technical Analyst	12 months	43000	Local Digital funding
Data Graduate (learning and development opportunity)	12 months	37300	Local Digital funding
Digital Coordination/Communications Officer	12 months (0.6 FTE)	28700	Local Digital funding

### 4.7 Tell us about your delivery plan.

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We have produced numerous reports and maps to demonstrate key functionality within software that officers can access. The project team is constantly refining datasets to reduce processing time and improve production of analytical products. Products are shared via MS Teams as we develop the web portal to ensure our district partners have similar access. Our Teams Site has been critical in the constant evolution of these products, tailoring them to user needs.

We will use a range of data relevant to helping make informed strategic planning decisions. This includes published local plan data; demographics; infrastructure project data and service data such as school locations and capacities; and national datasets such as those hosted by MAGIC. Data comes in a mix of tabular and geospatial forms cleaned into consistent and usable formats. Data is periodically refreshed to ensure currency and relevance.

The IMP intends to use applications such as Sharepoint, PowerBI and Power Automate. GIS is currently built and hosted via ESRI but other mapping software could be used.

We aim to have an initial web-based platform ready for full user engagement by end of Feb 2023. This will be delivered by commissioning a web developer.

Additional officers will be required to help support, promote and develop the platform and products once the web portal has been established. We do not anticipate problems recruiting to these roles as there is a strong talent pool within both planning and analytics in Kent.

Releases and revisions of each product are continuous depending on data availability, advances in technology and user testing, but a full set of products will be available before April 2023.

After a short period of testing and evaluation we intend to take the lessons learned and roll out a phased expansion programme to cover all of Kent.

The IMP will be hosted via our existing MS Azure Data Platform, widely used by LAs, managed by a dedicated security operations centre. Bulk sharing of datasets will be managed via Azure Data Share or industry recognised SFTP. Access will be controlled through MS Azure Active Directory authentication.

The IMP will be supported through our existing service desk and second line support arrangements. The platform admin will provide email / chat triage to the appropriate resource or initiate an incident ticket with the service desk.

### 4.8 Describe how your project team will have the skills and time available to deliver the project in an iterative, agile and user-centred way.

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The project team and the wider focus group come with a mix of formal and informal training relating to Agile principles. We hold regular meetings and catch ups with service partners and all actions, outcomes and lessons learned are recorded as part of project delivery, monitoring and evaluation. Iterative processes such as dataflows and automation are explored via our 'Tech Talk' sessions. We share the latest developments of our apps (reports, maps etc.) via our MS Teams site, regular Project Boards and representation at KCC's technology boards. Both successes and failures are recorded and discussed, driving continuous improvement. This will prove invaluable when expanding the platform to a Kent-wide product in a future stage.

We have a robust training offer in place when knowledge/skills gaps are identified and key staff are taking advantage of these. Products include Microsoft's ESI and Delta. Training to date has improved knowledge of the features and capabilities of software available to us and confirmed that this is sufficient to deliver the platform.

Learning is shared to wider audiences via several internal working groups.

We will commission specialists to deliver key elements of the platform's structure. These include a web designer to build our web portal and KCC ICT to ensure sufficient access and connections to KCC's datastore. The IMP will be supported by our new digital team which has a range of technical roles available for discrete periods of time as required. This team operates with a consistent change management methodology.

We are committed to effective knowledge management when working with external partners to build internal capacity and capability; leading to longer term self-sustainability.

### 4.9 Define the governance structure of your project.

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The Project Team is experienced in managing stakeholders who are geographically dispersed, working flexible patterns, and with differing expertise. This experience extends to coordinating activity across multiple services and local authorities along with the relevant governance structures that this involves.

Stakeholder analysis has informed a clear communication strategy that is ensuring effective and diverse communication methods are being used across the project. Communication is key to ensure that project stakeholders remain engaged. Our MS Teams site has been successful to date by utilising opportunities including live chat, product sharing and development, hosting workshops and posting project updates.

The County Council has a clear governance structure in place for the management of this project. The IMP is part of KCC's Strategy, Policy and Corporate Assurance programme and reports to the Leader-led Infrastructure First Group and our divisional technology programme board; both with senior leadership buy-in.

The Project Team has also been working with a Programme Stakeholder Manager to create a critical path of communication to ensure that the correct Members and Officers across KCC are kept informed of the project at key stages.

Externally, KCC will use existing working relationships with district stakeholders on an informal basis to engage with East Kent Officers. The Project team will use the contacts and expertise of partner organisations to assist in securing attendance at relevant East Kent Member and Senior officer forums as may be appropriate.

### 4.10 Outline the risks to project success.



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Whilst locally there is a strong political will amongst our stakeholders to deliver this project, the biggest risk to the platform's success is financial, given the current economic climate, where staff resources may need to be redirected elsewhere. This risk extends to continuous development and maintenance of the platform once the web portal is built. The funding bid for will resolve all these issues by allowing us to ensure recruitment to required posts and construct a secure hosting environment.

The other risk is data quality. The platform will have data needs from a wide selection of service areas often consolidated into single datasets for ease of processing. KCC has recently introduced a new data strategy where mechanisms are being implemented to improve data quality across the organisation. We intend to help upskill users in data discovery and data cleansing to minimise this risk.

The platform has been designed with flexibility in mind so its core structure and principles can be duplicated elsewhere, regardless of software involved. For example, if KCC or its partners changed mapping or business analytics software; we could adapt the data processing backend to suit and end users would see little change in the platform's outputs.

Because we intend to deploy the platform in phases, most risks can be addressed as part of our evaluation and continuous improvement processes; before new phases are released. Issues most often occur within an individual service area or product so are regularly covered when the product or associated data is refreshed.

End users have been involved from the start, helping shape the platform's development and this will continue. When issues and risks occur, these are recorded in our RAID log and discussed at monthly project boards.

### 4.11 Describe how project monitoring and evaluation will happen.

Currently, the GIF remains the most readily available document for evidencing strategic planning and the data contained within is outdated. Due to its static nature, it also lacks a monitoring programme in terms of tracking progress of infrastructure provision or how projects have been funded (or not). Relying on this as an evidence base for current planning matters introduces a range of risks leading to inefficient infrastructure provision and failed bids for funding infrastructure, as well as wasting considerable officer time spent working up the supporting documentation.

The IMP intends to rectify these issues through providing a single point of contact for strategic planning with all required evidence available in one place. Whilst Phase 1 is being developed, we are manually recording any engagement with the project team via our engagement tracker. This ensures a consistent monitoring stream. As part of our regular progress and evaluation processes, we use this and our MS Teams site to assess ideas that can be implemented as appropriate or, where relevant, noted for future phases of the project.

Once Phase 1 has been launched, feedback will be provided through the web portal elements of the platform. Channels will include live chat, comments and support/help functions. The IMP will also include a suite of live key performance indicators that will track against a set of approved critical success factors, platform data and platform usage statistics. Examples will include monitoring infrastructure projects in terms of delivery and funding and tracking individual page hits and product use.

### 4.12 Describe the benefits and savings your project is likely to deliver.

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By displaying planned housing growth and key strategic infrastructure assets and programmes in one place, the IMP will deliver optimised infrastructure provision and enable better strategic planning, especially around district borders.

The IMP will improve coordination across delivery partners, helping to ensure the right infrastructure, in the right place, at the right time, helping develop well supported and resilient communities. It will also increase opportunities for providing efficient multifunctional infrastructure. This will reduce both infrastructure planning and delivery costs.

A further benefit will be reduced need for consultancy work as data will be available to officers to clearly demonstrate current provision and where further infrastructure may be needed.

As well as more efficient delivery of infrastructure, the IMP will provide a robust evidence base, which should assist the County Council and District Council's deliver successful funding bids for infrastructure and greatly assist districts in developing local plans.

Performance for the project will be monitored as stated in 4.11. The Project team will use these statistics as part of its monthly evaluation and reporting processes. Further to this, we will continue using our engagement tracker and MS Teams Site to maintain feedback loops as the hosting solution for the platform is being developed.

As the IMP intends to use software and technology already available, there are minimal technology costs involved. Costs are more related to creating the platform structure and accelerating delivery of products.

At this stage, quantifying the wide-reaching benefits (outlined in sections above) that this platform will provide is challenging. We will make use of KPIs and our critical success factors in the first instance as we continue to develop monitoring approaches for social benefits. Options being considered include resident surveys in new large-scale developments and assessing economic growth.

### 5. Agreement with DLUHC

**5.1 Please confirm that you commit to delivering the project outputs listed below. Please tick the box to agree.**

- I agree

### 5.2 Agreements with DLUHC

**Please tick the box to agree.**

- I agree